## **Minneapolis Charter Commission Minutes**

### February 6, 2013 - 4:00 p.m. Room 317 City Hall, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Commissioners Present: Clegg (Chair), Cohen, Connell, Ferrara, Johnson, Kozak, Lickness, Metge,

Peltola, Rice, Rubenstein, Sandberg, Schwarzkopf

Commissioners Excused: Dolan, Gerdes

Also Present: Burt Osborne, Assistant City Attorney

#### 1. Roll Call

Chair Clegg called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. Roll call was taken.

#### 2. Adopt Agenda

Ferrara moved adoption of the agenda. Seconded.

Adopted upon a voice vote.

Absent - Dolan, Gerdes.

#### 3. Approve minutes of regular meeting of January 2, 2013

Schwarzkopf moved approval of the minutes of the meeting of January 2, 2013. Seconded. Adopted upon a voice vote.

Absent - Dolan, Gerdes.

#### 4. Chair's Report

No report.

#### **Discussion**

5. Proposal by Commissioner Rice to consider amending the Charter to provide for municipal elections in even-numbered years.

Commissioner Rice distributed materials relating to his proposal to amend the Charter to provide for municipal elections in even-numbered years. The purpose of the proposal is to increase voter turnout and participation, increase minority representation in elected city offices, and save \$1,300,000 in taxpayer money every four years. He also reviewed percentages of voter error by ward in the 2009 election using Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). After it was determined that the Charter Commission did not have the authority to change the election cycle, he offered to remove his proposal from the agenda, but Chair Clegg had recommended allowing the Commission the opportunity to discuss it.

Burt Osborne, Assistant City Attorney, stated that State Statute mandated that municipal elections be held in even-numbered years, but gave local governing bodies the power to change it to odd-numbered years by ordinance. Therefore, the power to determine when municipal elections are held in Minneapolis rests with the City Council.

Commissioners discussed/questioned the following:

- The challenges of combining federal, state, and municipal elections and using RCV for municipal elections but not for federal/state elections
- Voter confusion caused by the use of separate ballots for federal/state and municipal elections

- Federal and state elections overshadowing municipal elections if held together
- Using the money saved by holding municipal elections in even-numbered years for voter education to lower the rate of voter error

In response to questions, Casey Carl, City Clerk, stated that currently there is no federally certified equipment on the market capable of processing Ranked Choice Voting. They are working with vendors to identify potential alternative solutions using existing equipment and/or equipment that may be certified in time for the 2013 election.

Judy Schwartau, Elections Specialist, elaborated on the Voter Error Accounting Chart included in the materials distributed by Commissioner Rice. Current equipment is designed to notify voters of errors on their ballots such as party cross-over in a partisan primary, over-votes, and if the entire ballot is blank. With RCV, if there is an over-vote in the first column, voter intent cannot be determined and wherever that occurred, there was no successive counting. Current voting equipment cannot recognize across columns, a repeat candidate, or a skipped candidate.

Cohen moved to forward the proposal to the City Council without endorsement as beyond the purview of the Charter Commission. Seconded.

Adopted upon a voice vote.

Johnson recorded as voting "no".

Absent - Dolan, Gerdes.

Clegg stated that he would draft a cover letter to forward to the City Council with the proposal.

# 6. Plain Language Charter Revision: Discussion on educational and outreach planning.

Clegg stated that he, former Commissioner Melendez, Deputy City Attorney Peter Ginder, and Park Board counsel Brian Rice had discussed technical changes to the Plain Language Charter. Michael Salchert, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Attorney, was present and stated that Mr. Rice did not see any problems with the changes to the Plain Language Charter outlined in an email from Mr. Ginder. Clegg stated that he would work with Mr. Melendez to finalize the Plain Language Charter for the Commission's approval.

The Commission discussed activities they could proactively undertake between now and the election to educate the public on the ballot question relating to the Plain Language Charter. The following topics were discussed:

- Speaking with council members, the League of Women Voters, and media outlets such as the StarTribune
- Connecting with groups such as those contacted during redistricting
- Conducting open forums
- Utilizing the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department to reach out to all the neighborhoods in Minneapolis
- Requesting the City Council to support a public information effort by the Charter Commission and requesting participation from city departments to work with the Commission to communicate to the public
- Providing opportunities for the public to comment

Schwarzkopf moved that a Plain Language Charter Education and Outreach Group be formed to further consider possible ways to inform the public on the Plain Language Charter, with the group to report back at the March meeting. Seconded.

Adopted upon a voice vote.

Absent - Dolan, Gerdes.

Clegg requested that Commissioners interested in joining the outreach group contact him.

## **Public Commentary**

There was no one present wishing to address the Charter Commission.

Sandberg moved to adjourn. Seconded. Adopted upon a voice vote. Absent - Dolan, Gerdes.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:52 p.m.

Submitted by: Peggy Menshek, Charter Commission Coordinator